

2 January 1986
MBK-6001

MEMORANDUM FOR: Director, Foreign Broadcast Information Service
THROUGH: Chief, Operations Group
SUBJECT: Monthly Report -- Bangkok Bureau -- December 1985

I. GENERAL

A. The final touches were put on the ROSET installation during the TDY by Field Engineering Division Chief Harry Wood and engineer Phil Norusis. This included equipment associated with a smaller third dish dedicated to the Indian domestic satellite Insat and intended for use in monitoring Indian television. Until the new microwave system designed to handle ROSET is installed (sometime in February or March), the bureau has access to three teletype lines and an audio line for satellite-monitored material. At present, television video from ROSET is being recorded at Bang Ping and hand-carried to the bureau for viewing.

STAT Bureau Engineer [] spent most of his time at Bang Ping cruising for signals of interest. A number of press agencies have been printed including ANTARA, BERNAMA, PNA, an OANA pool, AFP, the Indian press agencies PTI and UNI, as well as TASS Russian. ROSET has also pulled in Malaysian and Indonesian television along with Moscow TV. The quality of the Indian television picture is not as good as TV from the 13-meter dishes, but is good enough to permit processing. A full-blown cruising program will be instituted after 9 January when [] arrives on long-term TDY.

STAT B. On the 30th, Pakistani President Ziaul Haq lifted martial law and turned the country over to civilian rule. There is still speculation as to how much power Zia will retain, but after 8½ years of martial law it is already clear the Pakistanis are delighted to return to civilian government.

C. Many countries in the Bureau's coverage area, not the least of them Thailand itself, were very happy when President Reagan vetoed the Jenkins Bill which would have restricted textile exports to the U.S. Thailand viewed it as a friendly gesture, but realizes there may be other legislation coming out of the U.S. Congress that may cause them trade problems. Thus at the end of the month the Thai foreign minister sent a letter to Secretary Schultz expressing concern over the farm bill that will make U.S. rice more competitive with Thai rice.

II. OPERATIONS

A. Monitorial/Editorial

1. On 2 December, the activities associated with the 10th anniversary of Laos put our small three-man Lao section to the test. The section began work at 0530 local time since Laos, which is in the same time zone as Thailand, scheduled their activities to begin at that early hour. A large amount of copy was generated and the section put in a fair amount of overtime for several days to cope with the event, which they did in a fine manner.

-2-

2. On 7-8 December, the leaders of Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, the Maldives, Nepal, Pakistan, and Sri Lanka met in Dhaka and formed the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SARC). This time our South Asian Unit put in long hours to cover the many speeches and events associated with the SARC founding. While the speeches were in English, the monitors point out that English is not the native language of some of the speakers, and the speeches may have been easier to understand if the individual had spoken in some other language.

3. On the 18th, Hanoi confirmed what had been rumored and stated that the next Vietnamese party congress will be held "toward the end of 1986". Based on the increased volume of recent filed material relating to the Vietnamese efforts to improve their economic management performance, the Bureau expects the Vietnam file to grow as the party congress approaches.

4. Hanoi Radio and VNA reception deteriorated during the month. The same thing happened a year ago during seasonal variations. The Bureau and Okinawa coordinate well on covering Hanoi media during times of bad reception, but on occasion neither bureau can adequately receive scheduled casts, particularly VNA.

5. The South Asian unit again went to special scheduling and overtime at the end of the month, this time to cover the 30 December Pakistani Parliament session and subsequent events and speeches associated with the termination of martial law. In particular, a lengthy speech by the Pakistani president and several speeches by the civilian prime minister required that monitors be called back from scheduled annual leave to aid in processing.

B. Lateral Services

London Bureau passed along several kudos from the BBC. On the 2d, the BBC News Bureau expressed many thanks for the report on the Malaysian Stock Exchange suspending trading which made the World Service. Then on the 19th, the News Bureau was "most pleased" with the Bangkok "exclusive" on Vietnam's critical review of the implementation of its 1985 state plan which Bush House used for one of its stories.

III. ADMINISTRATION

Personnel

Part-time secretary [] was promoted to GS-7 during the month.

IV. VISITS

A. Field Engineering Division Chief [] and [] 30 November -20 December to oversee final installation and testing of ROSET equipment.

-3-

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B. On 16 December, Okinawa staff editor [redacted] who had just completed a training TDY at Okinawa, spent a 1-day familiarization TDY at the Bureau while on personal travel in Thailand.

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C. Hong Kong Bureau Deputy Chief [redacted] on 20 December for a 1-day TDY while on private travel in Thailand.

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Chief, Bangkok Bureau

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Attachment:
Monthly Production Report